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## A DRAWING-ROOM DIFFICULTY.

CONSIDERING the number of rich and idle people in the world of fashion, and the magnitude of the 'staff' which is incessantly employed in catering for their amusement, how very few agreeable means have been discovered of passing an evening. Independently of cards, music, and dancing—against each of which there are often serious objections—what can drawing-room people do? That the want of some new indoor game is felt, is evident by the inventions that are forthcoming every week, all of which profess to teach us how to spend a pleasant hour, but with a result that is the reverse of satisfactory. Can anything be more humiliating than to be set down to play at *Squails*—the very name of which has something medicinal and horrid about it; who that has any self-respect would willingly make one of a party at *Cockamaroo*? or is *Progs and Toads* (notwithstanding that we are told it is the Chinese Imperial game) an attractive amusement for persons of condition? How can that be a 'fascinating game' which is said to be 'played on a leather board with twelve reptiles?' and, moreover, who will put up with being called 'a reptile,' when he goes out to spend the evening in his best clothes?

The game of *Hard Lines* is one which so many of us have experienced in real life (or seem to ourselves to have done so), that I can scarcely fancy its namesake being popular as an amusement; and as for the *Armstrong Gun*, I would like to see anybody practising that little game among the articles of *vertu* in my drawing-room. The same remark applies with even greater force to the relaxation called *Puff and Dart*, wherein life and limb, as well as property, seem to me to be most seriously endangered. All games that affect to be instructive as well as amusing—dealing with abstruse matters of History or Geography and the like—are simply fatal, after dinner, to all persons whose digestion is not that of the Ostrich. The best thing, in short, that the poor pleasure-seekers have had done for them seems to be the adaptation of their eternal croquet for dining-room tables. After a whole

afternoon's 'knocking about the balls' on the lawn, they proceed to kill their enemy, Time, in the evening, with the self-same lethal weapons reduced to duodecimo size. Queen Titania might have amused herself with her pocket-myrmidons, Peasblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed, at indoor croquet; and if Oberon had complained, like many a mortal Paterfamilias, of the expense of the Board, she would doubtless have hailed the last new patent, which, it appears, is to enable this fascinating pursuit to be played upon any table, if you do but happen to have a table-cloth which is of no great value. How Master Jacky will neglect this proviso when home for the holidays, and will mutilate the best damask after it has been laid for a dinner-party, and make his 'loose croquets' on to the champagne glasses, are things that it is easier to imagine than to defray the cost. But there are some people too old to indulge after dinner in contests compared to which 'the athletic game of cribbage' is easy work, and others who wish to have an opportunity of exhibiting their intelligence rather than their want of dexterity. For these, then, there are the time-honoured games of *How, when, and where*, of *Proverbs*, and of *Oral Tradition*.\* Now, of the first of these ingenious inventions, I may say, that it would not be so miserable a failure if it were a little more definite. The plan is, as most persons in this vale of tears must have been made aware, first to send some clever member of the company out on the landing, and then to fix upon some word with as many meanings as possible attached to it, which he is to guess by the Synthetic method.

Thus, suppose the word *Rap* or *Wrap* is chosen, then the clever person is admitted, and straightway begins to inquire of each member of the company, *How* they like it, *when* they like it, and *where* they like it; and from the answers given he is supposed to evolve the word. In reply to the

\* There is also that very ambitious game of Rhyme-writing, with which nobody who is not a born poet has, in my opinion, any business to concern himself, and the general result of which is such painfully evolved doggerel, as is humiliating to the human species.

first question, folks tell him with effusion that they like it Hot and Single and Double (this last has a dim connection in the young lady's mind who utters it, not with a thick shawl, but with a post-man's knock, and means she is fond of getting letters). To the second question of *when* they like it, they reply with much less enthusiasm, that they like it *when it's Hot, when it's Single, and when it's Double*. So that the poor wretch, who goes about like another Socrates propounding these ridiculous inquiries, has no more *data* to go upon than he had at first. When he arrives at '*where* they like it,' the ingenuity of the company being quite exhausted, they content themselves with such vague replies as '*in winter*' and '*at night*,' or with the bold but totally inapposite statement, that they don't like it at all. In the end, the clever person has to confess that he knows no more about the word than when he set out upon his investigation, and they put him outside the landing again, and fix on another.

Now the game of Proverbs enjoys a much higher share of public favour than the above amusement, while in some families, on account of the similarity of its name, I suppose (for I can conceive no other reason), with one of the books of Holy Writ, it is even permitted to be played upon a Sunday. I have played at it myself in the domestic circle upon a Good-Friday, without feeling very much the worse for it; and, indeed, if it is one of those pleasures which pall upon one rather soon, it is certainly not on account of any extravagant excitement that it produces. The clever person is sent out on the landing as before, and then a well-known proverb, such as, *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*, is fixed upon; somebody who has a foreboding that that is the only chance he will have of distinguishing himself, cries out *Come in*, and then the performance commences. The clever person asks any question he pleases of any member of the company, and receives a reply in which the first word of the proverb—*Sufficient*—must of necessity be mentioned; he then goes on in rotation, so that everybody knows when his turn is coming, and what word he will have to bring in, and you see him obviously employed in making as much of his answer as he can construct without knowing what he will be asked; just as a guest at a public entertainment who knows he will have to return thanks for something or other applies himself to composition during the courses. The unfortunate person who has got the word *thereof* to introduce in a natural manner, wishes in vain that a telegraphic message would arrive to say he is wanted at home, or even that he could make his nose bleed without exciting public observation, as an excuse to leave the room. However the clever person is inexorable, and the thing has to be got through. As a matter of fact, if he is really clever, he takes care, both in the former game as well as in the one of which I am now speaking, to put his ear to the keyhole, while he is on the other side of the door, and so to possess himself of the sacred secret. It is astonishing *how* clever he can make himself appear by this simple device; not only by guessing the proverb just at the right time, so as to extort admiration without exciting suspicion, but also by putting the most embarrassing questions to those who have got the most difficult words to mention in their replies. Many a drawing-room reputation

has been made by this unprincipled conduct, against which nothing is a sufficient safeguard—such is the innate love of display in the human heart!—save a good thick curtain over the door. There is almost always somebody either deaf or stupid to whom the proverb has to be confided at the top of the voice. This homely game is said to have been a favourite one with the late Premier at Broadlands; and I have been told that to see him wheeled out of the room (when gout forbade his walking) to bide his time until he was sent for by the company, was a very pleasant sight indeed; he carried the heart of a child under that care-laden yet unanxious breast. It was rarely indeed that he failed to guess the proverb; and in the case of such a *very* clever person as himself, it is possible that he did not use that stratagem already referred to, which occurs so naturally to folks of inferior ability.

*Oral Tradition* is a diversion founded with the philosophic view of shewing the absurdity of second-hand narrations. The clever person of the company, whom we will call 'No. 1,' is provided with pen and paper, and concocts a 'statement,' which he purposely makes as ridiculous and improbable as he can. He then goes out of the room, and a member of the company, No. 2, is sent to him, to whom he privately reads the document in question; then it is placed in his pocket, and nobody is permitted to look at it; the clever person returns, and another member of the company is sent out to receive by word of mouth as much of the statement as his predecessor can remember; No. 2 returns, and No. 4 receives from No. 3 what remains in *his* mind of the original narrative, and so on to the very last. This last person then comes in, and delivers the information that he has derived from No. 1 through oral tradition; after which No. 1 reads the written statement. It is the discrepancies between these two last which form of course the legitimate fun of the whole proceeding; but, besides that, this is a very popular game with young gentlemen and young ladies, a pair of whom, finding themselves outside the door together, will sometimes pleasantly prolong their duties as listener and narrator, or even introduce into the statement much agreeable but irrelevant matter.

The great objection to all these games, however, is, that people in general are not intelligent enough to play them, or at least to play them well; the majority of a drawing-room company, like that of all companies, being composed of dull folks, who cannot invent, nor even remember what is required of them. Of course this remark ought to have no weight when directed against that most charming of drawing-room amusements, Acting Charades, for it is only a few select members of a company who are ambitious enough to undertake that matter; and it is only charitable to suppose that they do not overrate their own abilities. To play a character at all, demands of course considerable intelligence, but to invent appropriate dialogue at the same time is a tax upon the mental powers which very few capacities are prepared to pay in full; a dividend of a penny in the pound, perhaps, would be the average of what could be screwed, for that purpose, out of ordinary individuals. There are more drawing-rooms, therefore, suitable for scenic representation (that is, with double doors or a curtain) than can furnish the fit *dramatis personæ*: the room is commonly much

better than the 'company,' so that Acting Charades is a rare treat.\*

After all, indeed, I am not sure whether of drawing-room games that very simple one of *Ivory Letters* is not the best, as it is certainly the most suitable for all degrees of intelligence; for, in spite of the Civil Service Commissioners, I must express my belief that most persons in society are able to spell. A difficult word engages everybody's ingenuity; and the amount of haphazard that is involved in the arrangement of the letters goes far to equalise the chances of sharps and flats. It is strange to see how resolute some people grow to get over their literal difficulty, and how furious at any well-meant offer to afford them assistance by giving them the leading letter; and again how other unassuming souls are thankful for any hint towards the elucidation of the mystery, and have no sort of proper pride at all. We have known great wits, and men of 'letters' too, as puzzled over a word of three syllables as any child, and quite as subject to loss of temper; and I must personally acknowledge to having used some violent expressions, when—having toiled in vain for many days at one of these enigmas, not only during leisure moments, but just at the times when mental concentration upon other matters was most needed—the pretty cousin who had propounded it to me wrote me a few heartless lines to say that she had by mistake given me a *t* too many. That *t* might have been Green, since the excess of it cost me two sleepless nights.

The most embarrassing combination of letters with which I have ever had to do is that which spells the word *Rateably*, and another word, which I will let my readers find out for themselves, after the fashion of those old pocket-books which used to ask riddles without answers, in hopes that people would buy a copy of the next annual issue for the sake of satisfying their minds. I may add, as an attraction to loyal subjects, that the letters in question are understood to have had the earnest attention of Her Majesty the Queen, who at last managed to arrange them in their proper order. I cannot say that this present writer was equally fortunate or sagacious; for, after prolonged study, he suffered the humiliation of having to 'give it up,' and be 'told.'

## MIRK ABBEY.

### CHAPTER XVIII.—AN UNCHEERFUL PICNIC.

By the time Lady Lisgard returned to the Abbey, notwithstanding that the sleek bays had devoured the road with all the haste of which their condition permitted, it was long past the breakfast-hour, and her absence from that meal provoked no little comment from the members of her family. Nobody was able to allay their curiosity as to what could have taken mamma to Dalwynch, but Miss Aynton did her best to stimulate it.

'She has gone upon Mary Forest's account,' said she—'that is all I can tell you. I never knew any one take such trouble about her maids as dear Lady Lisgard.'

\* The wittiest Acting Charade I have ever heard of, is the device by which a word of six syllables is conveyed to the audience in a single scene. One of the actors meets another and says: 'Good-morning, Doctor.' This being interpreted ingeniously, means *Met-a-physician*.

'Yes, Rose,' replied Letty warmly; 'but it is not every maid who has lived with her mistress thirty years. I believe Mary would lay down her very life for dear mamma, and indeed for any of us. Whenever I read those stupid letters in the papers about there being no good old servants to be seen now a days, I long to send the editor a list of our people at the Abbey. Mary, indeed, is quite a new acquisition in comparison with Wiggins and the gardener; but then she is almost faultless. I have heard mamma say that there has never been a word between them.'

'Not between them, indeed, Letty,' returned Miss Aynton laughing; 'for Mistress Forest has all the talk to herself.'

Sir Richard smiled grimly, for Mary had been in his bad books ever since her attachment to 'that vagabond Derrick.'

'Good, Miss Rose!' cried Walter—'very good. I wish I could say as much for this so-called new-laid egg. Why should eggs be of different degrees of freshness? Why not all fresh? Why are they ever permitted to accumulate?'

'My egg is very good,' observed Sir Richard sentimentally; 'how is yours, Miss Aynton?' and he laid an emphasis upon the name, in tacit reproof to his brother for having been so familiar as to say 'Miss Rose.'

'Well, Sir Richard, I am London bred, you know, and therefore your country eggs, by comparison, are excellent.'

'I wish I could think,' said the baronet with stateliness, 'that in other matters we equally gained by contrast with Town, in your opinion.'

'I believe London is the place to get everything good,' remarked Walter sharply.

'We are going to-day, Miss Aynton,' continued the baronet, without noticing the interruption, 'to offer you something which really cannot be got in town, and which hitherto the state of the weather has forbidden even here'—

'Ah, for shame, Richard!' interrupted Letty, holding up her hands. 'Now, that was to be a surprise for Rose.—It's a picnic, my dear. I dare say now you scarcely know *what* that is.'

'I can tell you, then,' ejaculated Walter with acidity: 'it's packing up all the things you would have in the ordinary course at luncheon in a comfortable manner—except the bread, or something equally necessary, which is always left behind—and carrying them about six miles to the top of an unprotected hill—in this particular case, to a tower without a roof to it—there to be eaten without tables or chairs, and in positions the most likely to produce indigestion that the human body can adapt itself to.'

'I have always been told that being in a bad humour is the most certain thing to cause what you eat to disagree with you,' observed Letty demurely.—'Never mind what Walter says. I am sure you will be delighted, dear Rose; we are going to Belcomb, a sort of shooting-box belonging to us, about five miles away, and built by grandpapa.'

'Commonly termed "*Lisgard's Folly*,"' added Master Walter.

'Not by his descendants, however, I should hope, with one exception,' observed Sir Richard haughtily.—'I will thank you, Walter, not to cut my newspaper.'

Master Walter had seized the paper-knife as though it had been a more deadly weapon, and was engaged in disembowelling one of the several journals which had just arrived by post.

'I did not see it was yours,' returned he. 'Goodness knows, nobody wants to read the *Court Journal* but yourself. The idea of not liking one's newspaper cut!'

'Yes, I must say, my dear Richard,' said Letty, playfully patting her elder brother, next to whom she sat, upon the shoulder, 'that is a most singular objection of yours. I think it certainly proves that you will always remain an old bachelor.'

Sir Richard maintained a frowning silence. Master Walter twirled his silken moustache, and looked up at Miss Aynton with a meaning smile.

'What is your opinion upon the subject,' said he, 'Miss Rose?'

'Insolent!' exclaimed Sir Richard, rising so hastily that he knocked over the chair on which he had been sitting. 'How dare you ask such questions in my presence?'

'Richard, Richard!' cried a reproving voice; and lo! at the open door stood my Lady, hollow-eyed and pale, and with such a weariness and melancholy in her tones as would have touched most hearts.—'Am I ever to find you and Walter quarrelling thus?—Yes, I have heard all, and think you both to blame; but nothing can excuse this violence. If I have any authority in this house at all, not another word, I beg.'

Sir Richard bit his lip, but resumed his seat; Walter went on quietly dissecting the *Illustrated London News*, with an air of intense interest; Miss Aynton very accurately traced the pattern of her plate with her fork; Letty, the innocent cause of the outbreak, shed silent tears. Altogether, the family picture was gloomy, and the situation embarrassing. My Lady reaped this advantage, however, that nobody asked her a word about her expedition to Dalwynch.

'Do not let me detain you at table, my dear Letty,' said she, breaking a solemn pause. 'Miss Aynton was so good as to make my coffee this morning, and therefore it is only fair that she should perform the same kind office now.'

Glad enough of this excuse to leave the room—a movement felt by all to be very difficult of imitation—Letty rushed up stairs to indulge in a good cry in her own bedroom, 'the upper system of fountains' only having been yet in play. Sir Richard gloomily stalked away towards the stables; Walter lounged into the hall, lit a cigar, and paced to and fro upon the terrace beneath the windows of the breakfast-room, with both his hands in his pockets. Whiffs of his Havana, and scraps of the opera-tune which he was humming, came in at the open window, to those who yet remained. My Lady had much too good taste to dislike the smell of good tobacco, and the air which he had chosen was a favourite one with her; perhaps Master Walter hummed it upon that account. He was to leave the Abbey next day to join his regiment—although not immediately. It was only natural he should wish to spend a few days in London after he had had so much of the quiet of Mirk, and yet my Lady grudged them. How

pleasant everything about him was; how dull the Abbey would be without him; what a sad pity it was that he and Sir Richard got on so ill. If she were to die, would they not turn their backs on one another for ever, and be brothers no more; and if something worse than Death were to happen to her—No, she would not think of that. Had not all that could be done to avert such utter ruin been done that very morning? There was surely no immediate peril now—no necessity for such excessive caution and self-restraint as she had been obliged of late months to exercise; it was something to have breathing-space and liberty.

'I hope you are coming with us to the picnic, Lady Lisgard, now that that horrid man has gone?' said a cold quiet voice.

My Lady, looking out of window at her favourite son, and lost in gloomy depths of thought, had entirely forgotten that she had invited Miss Rose Aynton to bear her company. She did not venture to look upon her questioner's face, though she felt that it was fixed on hers, reading Heaven knew what. How had she dared to think of liberty with this domestic spy under her very roof! What should she answer to this dreadful question? Something this girl must know, or must suspect, or she would never have ventured thus to allude a second time to the man Derrick, after her rebuff in the morning. Above all things, she would follow Mistress Forest's advice, and get Miss Aynton out of Mirk Abbey. She had intended to speak to her respecting what had just occurred at the breakfast-table; that would also offer an opportunity to say something more.

'Yes, Rose, I am going with you to Belcomb. It is a very favourite spot of mine—very. It was about that expedition, partly, that I wished to speak with you. I was about to ask you to be very careful in your conduct towards my sons this day. It is the last time they will be together for weeks, perhaps. Be kind to my poor Richard. Of course, Walter knew nothing of what has passed between you and his brother; but the bow which he drew at a venture sent home a barbed shot.'

Miss Aynton bowed her head.

'You were sorry for that, Rose, I know. You cannot fail to see how irritable he has lately grown, poor fellow. The fact is, he has overestimated the strength of his own powers of self-restraint. Your presence is a perpetual trial to him.' My Lady paused, anticipating some reply to a hint so palpable; but Miss Aynton, who carried her fancy-work in her pocket, continued to develop a pansy in floss silk; and the flower opened in silence.

'Under these circumstances, dear Rose,' pursued my Lady, 'do you not think it would be better—I know how embarrassing it would be to you to propose it, and therefore, although your hostess, I relieve you of the task—do you not think it would, on the whole, be wiser for you to leave us a little sooner than you had intended?'

The humming of the opera tune, and the odour of the Havana, were growing more distinct, and the elastic footfall on the gravel was coming very near.

'If I consulted my own feelings,' returned Miss Aynton, in firm clear tones, 'I should certainly have left Mirk before this, Lady Lisgard.'

'Hush, Miss Aynton, for Heaven's sake!' cried my Lady; 'the window is open.'

'But unless Sir Richard himself,' pursued the girl in more subdued accents, 'releases me from



my promise to remain until after his birthday, I must, with your permission, madam, do so; otherwise, he might possibly imagine that his presence is too great a trial for me, and I should be loath indeed to have my departure so misconstrued.'

There was bitterness in the tone with which she spoke, but determination too.

'I am to understand, then,' returned my Lady flushing, 'that contrary to my advice and wish—'

'Mother, dear, here comes the Break,' cried Master Walter, from the terrace beneath, in his ringing cheerful tones. 'I hope you have told Roberts about the prog.'

'Yes, dear, yes,' answered my Lady, lovingly even in her haste; then turning to the young girl, she whispered almost fiercely: 'At least, Miss Aynton, you will shape your behaviour this afternoon as I requested. There is no time now to discuss the other matter.' And indeed the butler entered the next moment with: 'The Break is at the door, my Lady.'

Now, the Break was a very roomy vehicle, with accommodation within it for three times the party who were now about to occupy it, beside two seats at the back, like flying buttresses, for footmen. Yet Sir Richard chose to sit upon the box beside the driver, a place only selected (unless for smoking purposes) by persons with 'horsey' characteristics, who prefer coachman's talk to that of their equals, and among whom the baronet could not be justly classed; but the fact was, the young man was in an evil temper, and desired no companionship but his own. He would have seen the whole expedition at the bottom of the sea—a metaphor open to the gravest objections, but which he used while arguing the matter with himself aloud—if it were not that that fellow Walter was going—and—and—he was not going to let him have all the talk to himself, that was all. True, Sir Richard had given up the idea of transforming Miss Aynton into Lady Lisgard; but still it was not pleasant to see another man making himself exclusively agreeable to her. He was annoyed with himself at having exhibited such passion at the breakfast-table, for the more he thought of it, the more he felt convinced that Walter's remark, although doubtless intended to be offensive, had not been made with any knowledge of his own rejected suit. Still, he was in a very bad temper, and listened to the conversation going on behind his back with a moody brow, and every now and then a parting of the lips, through which escaped something the reverse of a prayer.

It was Walter, of course, who was talking.

'Inhabited!' said he in answer to some question of Miss Aynton's; 'O dear, no. Belcomb never had a tenant but once, and I should think would never have another. One Sir Heron Grant and his brother took it two years for the shooting-season: a brace of Scotchmen whose ancestors dated from the Deluge, but so dreary a couple, that one wished that the family had started from a still earlier epoch, and been all washed away.'

'I thought Richard rather liked Sir Heron,' observed Letty simply.

'Yes, because he was a baronet; and birds of the same gorgeous plumage flock together, you know. There was nothing remarkable about him but his feathers, and he scarcely ever opened his mouth except to put food in it. It is said that in the old stage-coach times, he and his brother travelled from Edinburgh to London, and only uttered one

sentence apiece. At York, the younger brother saw a rat come out of a wheat-rick. "By Jove," cried he, "there's a rat!" The next morning, and after an interval of about eighty miles, Sir Heron replied: "Ay, if Towser had seen that rat, he would have made short work of him."

'Well, it appears, they agreed, at all events,' returned Rose coldly. 'After all, even a foolish remark is better than an ill-natured one.'

'The scenery is getting well worth your attention here,' observed Sir Richard, turning graciously round towards Miss Aynton. 'Belcomb is a complete solitude, but for those who are contented with the pleasures of the country, it is a pleasant spot enough.'

'Can we see the house from here, Sir Richard?'

'No, not until we reach this Windmill, on the top of the hill. The private road branches out from the highway at that spot; and the mill is the nearest inhabited house to Belcomb.—By the by, mother, Hathaway must be spoken to about those sails of his—there, you saw how even old Jenny started at them—it is positively dangerous for horses to pass by. He must build up that old wall a foot higher, and put a gate up. Any stray cattle might wander in and get knocked down—the sails are so close to the ground.'

Master Walter had not at all relished Miss Aynton's rejoinder to his story; still less had he liked his brother's striking into the conversation; least of all did he approve of this landlord talk about repairs and alterations, which reminded him of his being a younger son, and having neither part nor lot in the great Lisgard heritage.

'There's the Folly,' cried he suddenly, with a view of changing the subject; 'upon that cliff-like hill yonder above that belt of trees.'

'What, that beautiful ivied tower!' exclaimed Rose.

'Yes; without a roof to it.'

'Well, at all events, it's very pretty,' said Miss Aynton reprovingly. 'I am sure, Mr Walter, you ought to be grateful to your grandpapa for building so picturesque an edifice.'

'He might have made a road, however, to it,' observed Walter satirically; 'a road and a roof, I do consider to be indispensable.'

'There's a beautiful winding path through the wood, Rose,' said Letty, 'fifty times better than any road; and is not the piece of water charming? It is the only one with any pretension to be called a Lake in all the county.'

Certainly Belcomb deserved praise. A small but comfortably furnished house, embosomed in trees, through which were the pleasantest peeps of hill and dale, and spread before it quite a crystal tarn, with rocky islands so picturesquely grouped that they almost gave the notion of being artificial. It was as though a segment of the Lake country had been cut off, and inserted into the very midst of Wheatshire.

It was as lonely, too, to all appearance, as any Cumberland mere. An old man and his wife, who were in charge of the place, came hurrying out with respectful welcomes, and the latter was about to remove the shutters of the drawing-room, when my Lady interposed.

'No, Rachel; we will not trouble you to do that. We are going to picnic at the Tower. You seem quite surprised to see us so early. I suppose nobody has been here yet upon the same errand.'

'Well, no, ma'am; nor is it likely, after your orders'—

'Oh, the fact is, mother,' interrupted Sir Richard with a little stammer, 'I forgot to tell you about it; but Rinkel informs me there has been considerable damage done by parties coming here from Dalwynch and other places, and therefore he has put up a Notice to prohibit the whole thing in future.'

And, indeed, upon the path leading to 'the Folly,' which could be approached by another way than that in front of the house, they presently came upon a board recently erected, which threatened Trespassers with all the rigour of the law.

There was a bitter sneer upon Captain Lisgard's handsome face, at this assumption of authority upon the part of his brother, and it did not soften when my Lady thoughtfully remarked: 'Ah, well; that will certainly make the place very private.'

A curious reply, as Letty thought, at the time, for her mother to make, who was always so eager to oblige her neighbours, and who well knew how popular Lisgard's Folly was with the humbler class of townfolk in the summer months. But she was destined to be vastly more astonished before that day was spent.

The little party, so strangely out of accord with one another, took their lunch, indeed, beneath the shadow of the Tower; but all those harmonious elements which are so absolutely essential to the success of a picnic were wanting. There were no high spirits, no good-humoured badinage, and not the ghost of a laugh. My Lady, singularly silent even for her, gazed around her on the familiar landscape, or regarded the shuttered cottage with a mournful interest, as though they reminded her of happier times. Miss Aynton, careful of what my Lady had enjoined, was studiously urbane to Sir Richard, but without obtaining the wished-for result; for while the baronet was thereby only rendered tolerably gracious, the captain grew intensely irritated. Poor Letty, who was the only one prepared to be agreeable, or had any expectation of enjoying herself, felt immensely relieved when the repast was concluded, and the horses were ordered to be 'put to.' As for strolling about the grounds, and pointing out their varied beauties to Rose, as she had counted upon doing, that was no longer to be thought of. Sir Richard, as usual, offered his arm in stately fashion to his mother; but Master Walter, lighting a cigar, stood for a few minutes looking down with knitted brow upon the lake, then sauntered after them, without saying a word, and with both hands in his pockets.

'Dear Rose,' cried Letty, who watched these proceedings with little short of terror, 'what have you said to make Walter so cross? I never saw him behave like that in my life. He did not even look at you. Would it be very wrong if you just ran after him, and said a word or two before we got into the carriage? I am so dreadfully afraid of a quarrel between him and Richard.'

'Just as you please, Letty,' returned Miss Aynton, looking pale, and a little frightened too; and forcing a laugh, she tripped down the zigzag path in pursuit of the exasperated captain.

Letty waited a reasonable time, watching the footman collect the débris of the entertainment, and pack the plate, and then, supposing their difficulty had been adjusted, followed upon the track of her friend and Walter. The path was

not only of considerable length, but so very steep, that one little zigzag overhung another; thus, as she descended, she perceived through the thin Spring foliage the two young people standing beneath her, although they were quite unconscious of her approach. She caught the last words of something Rose was saying; those were: 'Walter, dear.' She marked the girl stretch her arms towards him, as though she would have clasped them round his neck; and then she saw Captain Lisgard, of her Majesty's Light Dragoons, put her roughly by, shake himself free of her with a movement expressive almost of loathing, and turn upon his heels with an oath.

#### CHAPTER XIX.—THE FINESSE IN TRUMPS.

It is the Night before the Derby. The West End is thronged with men. The streets are perceptibly more thronged with well-dressed males than at any other time in the year. The May meetings brought enough of parsons and sober-coated laity to dull the living tide—to almost make us Londoners a mournful people (which we are, naturally, *not*, despite what Frenchmen say); but those grave ones have either departed from us, or are now lost and undistinguishable in this influx of gay company. All the new-comers are in their most gorgeous raiment, for is not this the great 'gaudy' week of the Wicked? Half the officers of cavalry in her Majesty's service have obtained leave of absence for eight-and-forty hours upon urgent private affairs; and a fourth of the infantry have done the like; they have come up from every station within the four seas to see the great race run, which is to put in their pockets from five pounds to fifty thousand. Over their little books they shake their shining heads, and stroke their tawny moustaches in a deprecating manner, but each one has a secret expectation that 'he shall pull it off this once;' for, upon the whole, our military friends have not been fortunate in turf transactions. There is a fair sprinkling, too, of respectable country gentlemen, who rarely leave their families to occupy their old-bachelor quarters at *Long's* or the *Tavistock*, except on this supreme occasion. Every fast university-man who can obtain an *exeat* upon any pretence whatever—from sudden mortality in the domestic circle down to being *suborned* by a friendly attorney in the supposititious case of *Hookey* (a blind man) *v.* *Walker*—is up in town resplendent, confident, Young. Every sporting farmer, save those in the north, who have a private saturnalia of their own in the mid-autumn, has left his farm for two nights and a day, and is seeing life in London. Besides these, an innumerable host of well-dressed scoundrels—for whom the word 'Welcher' is altogether too commendable—have come up from country quarters, where they have been playing various 'little games,' all more or less discreditable, to work together for evil with their metropolitan *confrères* for four days.

Every haunt of dissipation is holding highest holiday. The stupid, obscene Cider Cellars find, for one night at least, that they have attractions still; the music-halls are tropical with heat and rankest human vegetation; Cremorne, after the crowded theatres have disgorged their steaming crowds, is like a fair. The strangers' room at all the clubs has been bespoken this night for weeks. In the card-rooms, the smoking-rooms,

the billiard-rooms, there is scarcely space to move, far less to breathe in; yet there is everywhere a babblement of tongues, and the words that are most bandied about from feverish mouth to mouth, are first, *The King*, and secondly, *Menelaus*. The tout had kept his word—either from fear or nicest honour—until the stipulated week had elapsed, and then the news of the trial-race began to circulate: from his outsiders' place, to that of fourth favourite, then of third, and at last to that of second had 'the French horse' gradually risen. A curious and illogical position enough—but then the turf people are illogical—for if the news that he had beaten *The King* was true, he ought to have been first favourite; and if the news was not true, he had no reason to find favour at all. As it was, however, *The King* had come down half a point as if to meet him, to 9 to 2; while *Menelaus* stood at 5 to 1.

And Had that trial-race really taken place or not? and if so, Was it on the Square? was the question which was just then agitating the Houses of Lords and Commons (nay, it was whispered, Marlborough House itself), and all the mess-tables in her Majesty's service, more than any other subject in this world. There was also a vague rumour that the favourite's 'understandings' were not as they should be; that there was a contraction that might be fatal to his prospects; that the idol's feet were of clay. Ralph Derrick had 'put the pot on' his *Many Laws*, and would be a millionaire if he won; but Walter Lisgard had put more than the pot. If the French colours did not shew in front at the winning-post, the captain, still to use the elegant metaphor of the sporting fraternity, would be in Queer Street. So infatuated had the young man grown, that he had absolutely hedged even that one bet which insured him a thousand pounds in case *The King* should win the race. Notwithstanding his coyness in accepting the first offer of a loan from his uncultivated friend, he had borrowed of him twice since, in each case giving his I.O.U., whereby he endeavoured to persuade himself that he was liquidating all obligation; yet, unless he considered his mere autograph was worth the sums for which it was pledged, I know not how he succeeded in this. For if *Menelaus* did not happen to win, he not only would not have enough to discharge his debts of honour for nearly two years—when he would come into possession of his patrimony of five thousand pounds—but even a great portion of that would be bespoken. Thus, of course, he had placed himself, through mere greed, in a most unpleasant position; but at the same time it must be allowed that he had yielded to a great temptation, such as would probably have made the mouth of any financier water, had the opportunity offered in his particular line; for with the exception of mere outsiders, *The King* had beaten every horse that was to contend with him on the morrow; and *Menelaus*, to Walter's certain knowledge, had beaten *The King*.

Equinely speaking, then, it was a certainty that the French horse should win the Derby, in which case the young man's gains would be prodigious; for not only had he taken advantage of the original position of the animal in the betting, but as the odds grew less and less, had still backed him, until his possible winnings reached, on paper, to five figures; on the other hand, by this last piece of imprudence,

his possible— But no, it was not possible. 'Things surely wouldn't go so devilish cross with a fellow as that;' or to put the captain's thought in other words, the Government of the Universe being founded upon just principles, would never permit such a stupendous misfortune to overwhelm him; or, it might be, the gallant captain believed that Fortune was indeed a female, and would therefore hesitate to inflict calamity upon so pretty a fellow as himself. At the same time, the event of the morrow was so big with fate, that it was not pleasant to dwell upon it; and anything which could have prevented his mind from recurring to the same, would have been welcomed gladly. But there was but one thing that had the power to do this. His anxiety was far too deep to be flattered away by the smile of Beauty, or lost in the sparkle of Wine. The homoeopathic treatment, *similia similibus*, he felt was the only one that could now give him relief, and he therefore sought for rest from the cares of the race-course in the excitement of the gaming-table. Do not, however, let it be supposed that the captain sought out any of those convenient establishments for the immediate transfer of property, which are guarded by iron doors, and always liable to the incursions of the police, who, upon breaking in, discover four-and-twenty gentlemen (one of whom has swallowed the dice), sitting round a green baize table in conversation about Music and the Fine Arts. Master Walter was rash in his speculations, but he was not madman enough to play chicken-hazard against foxes.

'I think I shall try my luck with the *Landrails* to-night,' observed he to his companion Derrick, stopping short in flaring Piccadilly, and biting his nails. The two men had been occupying lodgings in the same house, the *Turf Hotel* being full; the younger finding a species of comfort in the society of the part-owner of *Menelaus*, who was even more confident of the success of that noble quadruped than himself.

'By all means, my lad,' returned the goldfinder simply, 'although I don't know what they are; and so as you take me with you, I don't care.'

Three weeks ago, such a proposition would have staggered the captain, or rather, he would have rejected it point-blank. To be seen in public with his uncouth and flashily-attired friend, was at that time a considerable trial to the fastidious light dragoon; but the immense interest which they had in common, had rendered the familiarity of the once-odious Orson at first tolerable, and eventually welcome, and even necessary. He had taken him with him into quite exclusive circles, and, except on one occasion at the *Rag*, where Derrick, having drunk more champagne than was good for him, had offered to fight Major Pompos of the Fusiliers for what he liked, nothing unpleasant had taken place in consequence. Men observed: 'What a deuced rum fellow Lisgard brought with him the other night;' but the said stranger had lost his money very good-naturedly at the whist-table, and it was understood that he had more to lose. Under such circumstances, the gentlemen-players were very charitable. Mr Ralph Derrick did not play a first-rate game at whist; very few persons who have not been brought up in good society do; but his performance was not so inferior as to make success impossible for a night or two, however certain the ruin that would have overtaken him in the long-run. Moreover, he was

never 'put off his head' by the largeness of the stake, his habitual lavishness in money-matters rendering him indifferent to that matter. Captain Liagard, on the other hand, though an excellent player, considering his tender years, was liable to have his nerves disorganised at any crisis of a rubber upon which an unusual amount depended.

'Yes,' repeated Master Walter, 'I'll try my luck at the *Landrails*, and you shall come, too, Ralph. Any member has a right to introduce whom he likes.'

'Even a miner from Cariboo—eh, Master Walter, provided he's got money in his pocket? Well, I'm their man, whether it's for whist or all-fours.'

'All-fours!' repeated the captain with irritation. 'Who ever heard of a gentleman playing at that game? Do, pray, be particular in what you say to-night. Whatever you do, call a knave a knave, and not a *Jack*. The *Landrails* is a very select place, Ralph, where men who like to play their whist more quietly than at the *Rag* look in for an hour or two rather late.'

'Heavier stakes, I suppose?' observed Derrick bluntly.

'Yes, rather. You see, there's always some row with the committee, if play gets beyond a certain height at the regular clubs. Now, this is a sort of friendly circle where the points are quite optional, and the bets too. Yes, I think I shall try my luck for a pony or two.'

'I don't think you look quite fit for whist, my lad, to-night,' returned Derrick, gazing gravely into the young man's haggard face. 'To-morrow will be a trying day, remember; I think you had much better get to bed.'

'I couldn't do it, man!' replied Walter vehemently—'I dare not. I should never sleep a wink, and perhaps go mad with thinking before the morning. Look here, how my hand trembles. I have not nerves of iron, like you.'

'Poor lad, poor lad!' ejaculated the other with affectionate compassion. 'Nothing, as you say, ever makes me tremble—except D. T. Ah, Heaven, but that is terrible! Never drink, lad, never drink;' and something like a shudder throbbled through the speaker's brawny frame.

'The *Landrails* meet here,' said Walter, stopping at the door of a private house in the neighbourhood of St James's Palace; 'it is past eleven, and I dare say play has begun.'

'Who owns this house?' asked Derrick carelessly, surveying the unpretending tenement in question—'or rather, who pays the rent?'

'Well, I hope we shall, Ralph, this evening. The fact is, the hire of the rooms, the attendance, and even the cost of the refreshments, are all defrayed each night by the winners in proportion to their gains. Money does not change hands until the ensuing week, but the secretary enters all accounts in his ledger, and sees that they are duly squared. I am answerable for your liabilities to-night, so do you be careful with the liquors.'

As the youthful Mentor administered this wholesome piece of advice to his senior, the door opened, and they were admitted. It was a most respectable house, neither very large nor very small, and neatly but inexpensively furnished. The butler was a man who might have been the body-servant of an evangelical bishop, and whose conscience was troubled by the spiritual shortcomings of his right reverend master. To come upon so grave and sad a man upon the eve of the Derby Day, was quite a

homily in itself. Through the open door of the dining-room could be seen a cold collation, at which men dropped in from above-stairs if they felt so disposed; but there were light refreshments in the drawing-room also, and a great variety of pleasant drinks. The *Landrails* were thirsty folks, and imbibed gallons of iced hock and Seltzer water; but they had not, as a rule, good appetites. There were three tables for whist, and one dedicated to piquet or *écarté*. All these had massive candlesticks screwed into their woodwork—perhaps only to prevent their falling off; but it also put a stop to any possible use of them as a weapon or missile, and I think that contingency had been also taken into account. A candlestick comes uncommonly handy to the fingers when luck has gone pertinaciously against one, and the man who has won all the money is personally hateful. Above all things, it was important, in that quiet, friendly circle, to repress all ebullition of temper, and to steer clear of all disputes. Nobody, one would hope, who was in a position to be admitted to that society would stoop to cheating; but a little strap was inserted at the opposite corners of each table for the convenience of marking the score, wherein, when the counters were once placed, they could not be accidentally removed by the elbow.\*

The spacious room—for it was a double drawing-room—was by no means brilliantly lit up; a couple of bare wax-candles stood upon the refreshment-table, where, by the by, there was no attendant, each man helping himself at pleasure; but the other four pair in the room had shades over them, which dulled their radiance, although it caused them to throw a very bright light upon the tables themselves. When the new-comers entered, which they did quite unannounced, the sight struck one of them at least as a very strange one: three shining isles of light—for one whist-table was not in use—amid a sea of gloom; ten thoughtful faces with a sort of halo round them, and one or two sombre ones standing by like their evil genii, and watching the play. There was not a sound to be heard at first, except the dull fall of the pieces of pasteboard, but presently a hand being finished in their neighbourhood, a sort of hushed talk began about what would have happened if somebody had under-played the diamond.

'What are the points?' whispered Derrick in his companion's ear.

'What are the points to-night, Beamish?' inquired Walter of one of the four, a very unimpassioned-looking young man, who replied with a most unpleasant and ghastly smile—as though he had cut his throat a little too high up: 'Fives and fifties, my gallant captain, with the odds in ponies; so, being a younger son, I advise you to go to some other table.'

'Never mind, I am going to make a good marriage,' returned Walter coolly. Mr Beamish had been a penniless government clerk until he wedded the widow of an opulent builder with half a town for her jointure. 'If you are not full,' added the captain, 'I declare in here, for myself and friend.'

All four looked up for an instant at the threatened stranger; for your good player, intent

\* Persons who are acquainted with the game of whist have informed me, that it is sometimes better—in the case of holding two by honours, for instance—to be at three than four.



on gain, detests the introduction of an unknown hand. Somehow or other, although the odds are two to one, 'it's always his cursed luck to have him for a partner.' General Prim, who had been a martinet in the Peninsula, and as offensive to his fellow-creatures as less favourable circumstances had permitted ever since, gave a ferocious grin, and shook his single scalp-lock of gray hair like a malignant pantaloon. The Hon. Pink Hawthorne, attaché at the court of Christiana, but absent from that lively capital upon sick-leave, wrenched his fair moustache this way and that, and frowned as gloomily as his foolish forehead would permit. The dealer, a Mr Roberts, an ancient bencher of one of the Inns of Court, paused with the trump card in his fingers still turned. 'Does your friend know what the Blue Peter means, Lisgard?' 'I've been a sailor half my life, sir, and it's devilish odd if I did not,' returned Ralph Derrick grimly.

'What the devil did the fellow mean?' added he to Walter as the game began, and all the four became at once automatons.

'It's the new system of asking for trumps,' answered Walter peevishly. 'The same thing that they called the Pilot the other night. How ridiculous you have made yourself. See, there's another table up. Bless the man, not there, that's the piquet place.'

Ralph had quietly seated himself next to Major Piccalilli, of the Irregular Cavalry, Cayenne Station, Upper India, and had already disturbed his marking-cards, whereby that gallant officer was reduced to the verge of apoplexy with speechless rage.

'Stay, you shall stick to this one,' continued Walter in a low voice; 'that fellow Beamish is hateful to me—and I will cut in yonder. There is not a muff-table in the room—all these beggars play too well.' With these words, the Captain hurried away; and as soon as the rubber he had been watching was finished, Derrick was admitted of the conclave, to the exclusion of General Prim, who cursed that circumstance very audibly, and for a man of his advanced years, with considerable emphasis and vigour. Derrick fell as a partner to the lot of the gentleman who had inquired as to his proficiency in the art of asking for trumps.

'If you would only hold your cards a *little* more on the table, I should be able to see them myself,' remarked Mr Roberts with severity.

'If they look over my hands, sir,' returned Derrick reassuringly, 'I'll forgive 'em: that's all.—If you won't take that old gentleman's bets—referring to the general, who seemed extremely anxious to back their adversaries—then I will;' and he did it—and luck went with him. There was nothing stronger than champagne to be got at in that respectable place of business, so Ralph kept his head, and won—a hundred and fifty pounds or so. Then, the table breaking up, he rose and stood over his young friend, to see how the cards were going with him.

'Bad,' muttered Derrick to himself, as he watched Walter running through his hand with eager haste, as a woman flirts her fan. His beautiful face was dark with care, his eyes flashed impatiently upon the man whose turn it was to lead.

'Our odds are in fifties, eh, Lisgard?' drawled his right-hand adversary, Captain and Lieutenant Wobegon of the Horse Guards' azure.

'The same as before, I suppose,' returned the young man haughtily.

Ralph gave a prolonged whistle. His young friend had a treble up, and the others nothing, so that he must be betting two hundred and fifty pounds to one hundred; and 'the same as before' too! Within the next minute, the cards were thrown down upon the table, and the adversaries scored a treble likewise. 'That's been my cursed luck, Ralph, all to-night!' cried the young man with a little grating laugh. 'Four by honours against one every deal.'

'You must have been doing something devilish bad, Lisgard,' observed the Guardsman.

'Yes, I have—playing!' answered Walter bitterly. 'But no fellow can play with sixes and sevens; it demoralises one so.'

'All cards do, my grandmother says,' answered Wobegon, who for a Guardsman was not without humour. 'She made me promise, when she paid my debts, my first Derby, that I would never back anything again; and I never have, except my luck and bills.'

Captain Lisgard had naturally a keen appreciation of fun, but he did not vouchsafe a smile to the facetious Guardsman, who himself joked like an undertaker, and had never been known to laugh in his life. The fact was, that nothing could just now commend itself to Master Walter except winning back his money.

Reader, did you ever play for more than you can afford? Pardon me the inquiry; there is no occasion to be Pharisaical; for it is even possible to do worse things than that in your own line: moreover, the question of what is more than you can afford is such a large one, and affords such opportunities for a nimble conscience to escape. I remember in Lord Houghton's *Life of Keats*, that that gallant nobleman, in defending the poet from the charge of dissipation and gambling, remarks that it all arose from his having lost ten pounds upon a certain evening at cards. Now, considering that the author of *Hyperion* had no income, nor any bank except his imagination to apply to—and it was notorious that he could never put a cheque even upon that—I take his Lordship to be a very charitable peer. Ten pounds must have been, for Keats, a large sum. But, undoubtedly, the matter is one for a man to decide for himself; the whole question is relative; and if you are apt to lose your temper, then remember you play for more than you can afford, although your stakes are but—penny-stamps. Captain Walter Lisgard had lost his temper and his money also. There was a numbed sense of misfortune pervading him; it seemed to him as though he was Predestinated to lose. I am much mistaken if he had not a sort of humming in his ears. One of the most religious men whom it has been my fortune to meet, has informed me that, in his unregenerate days, when he was a gambler and everything else,\* he once *prayed to win* at cards.

'Then it strikes me,' said I, 'in addition to your other backslidings at the time you speak of, you were just a trifle blasphemous.'

'No, sir,' said he; 'I think not. All that I possessed in the world was depending upon the result

\* 'Every sin, sir, in the Decalogue, I am glad to say, have I committed'—meaning that the present change in him was rendered thereby all the more satisfactory—with the sole exception of murder.'

of a certain game at écarté. If I had lost it, I should have been a beggar. If I won it, I resolutely resolved never to touch a card again—never to run the risk of experiencing a second time the mental agony I was then undergoing. I am not ashamed to confess, sir, that in such a strait I prayed to win; and I *did* win.

'All I have to say, sir,' replied I, 'is this: that it was uncommonly hard upon the other man.'

Good resolutions are indeed by no means uncommon among tolerably young persons in positions of pecuniary peril, such as that of Captain Lisgard. They vow their candles to this and that patron saint if they should but escape shipwreck upon the green baize this once. Master Walter's bid was confined to a few 'dips,' if one may use so humble a metaphor, of which about fifty went to the pound, and even those were not offered in a penitent spirit. He would never play whist with the *Landrails* any more. He would never lay the long odds beyond 'outers'—a foolish word he and his set used for sovereigns. He would never back himself at all when playing with 'that fool Pompus'—his present partner. He would become, in short, exceedingly wise and prudent, if he should only 'pull off' this present rubber. There was 'life in the Mussel' yet. They were at 'three all' when Pompus led his knave instead of his ten, from ten, knave, king, and only got the trick when he should have got the game.

'We shall never have another chance now,' sighed Walter, as his left-hand adversary turned up the queen. But privately he thought that fortune would not be quite so cruel as all that came to; moreover, he had an excellent hand. His fingers trembled as he arranged the long suit of clubs, headed by tierce major, and saw that he had four trumps to bring them in with.

As the game went on, however, Pompus exhibited his usual feebleness, and things began to look very black indeed. In the third round of trumps, Master Walter's memory left him sudden as an extinguished taper. It is said to have to say it of so excellent a player, but he recollected nothing whatever, except that, if he lost that rubber, it would be an addition of three hundred pounds to the sum he already owed Captain Wobegon. It was his turn to play, and he was third hand. He had the king and ten of trumps. The ace had been played; ay, he remembered that after a struggle, and the knave too. Yes, his left-hand adversary had played the knave. Should he finesse his ten or not? That was the question, upon the decision of which depended some five hundred pounds. Whist is not always a game of pleasure. Master Walter finessed the ten. 'Thousand devils!' cried Derrick with a tremendous imprecation, 'why the queen was turned up on your left, lad: you have thrown away the game.' And it was so. You Lisgard did not speak a word; but having compared his note-book with that of Captain Wobegon, retired into a little office out of the back drawing-room, where the secretary of the *Landrails* entered the members' somewhat complicated little accounts with one another in a very business-like looking ledger. 'You have had a bad night of it for you, sir,' remarked this gentleman quietly; 'you generally hold your own.'

'Yes. What is the cursed total?'

'Eighteen hundred.'

'Ralph Derrick,' said Walter Lisgard, as the two walked up St James's Street towards their lodgings

for bath and breakfasts, but scarcely for bed, since the morning was already far advanced—'if any horse but *Menelaus* wins the race, I am a ruined man.'

## THE RURAL ECONOMY OF SWITZERLAND.

THERE is perhaps no country in Europe which allures to itself so many travellers as Switzerland. From far and near, north, east, south, and west, an annual tide of visitors cross its boundaries, and spreading themselves over this favoured land, bask in the sunshine of its smile.

Though of small circumference, and insignificant as compared with the powerful states by which it is surrounded, Switzerland yet possesses characteristics which have established its social position, and left it in some respects unrivalled among nations. Like one of her own smiling valleys, embedded in walls of solemn grandeur, Switzerland lies ensclosed within the heart of Europe, her Alpine heights and mountain fortresses determining the boundary-line of her dominions; and secure in these, her native fortresses, she has hitherto repelled the attacks of political aggression.

Notwithstanding, however, the number of travellers who visit Switzerland in summer for its scenic attractions, but little of its rural economy is yet known, nor perhaps is this to be so much wondered at, for the impression made on the mind of man by the sublime scenery through which he passes, is of so overpowering a kind, that under the first blush of enthusiastic admiration, there is no room left for the more practical questions which labour and necessity invoke. The inflated mind, as it drinks in the beauties of creation, forgets that in those mighty Alps which rise in majestic confusion around, we read of a convulsed and ruined world; in the wild poetry of the rugged rocks, the groans of a desolate creation; and in the stunted firs which fringe the frozen surface of the heights, the cry of a barren vegetation.

True, nature associates with these harsh outlines softer influences, for rich forests, verdant slopes, and graceful vineyards colour the landscape, each adding its quota to form one glorious whole, while the very dispositions of the soil and climate furnish rich stores of wealth, which repay laborious toil by certain gain.

The productions of the country are not limited to such as correspond to man's bodily wants only, for innumerable treasures, suited to satisfy the hunger of the soul in its search after knowledge, lie either embedded in its soil, or scattered over the surface of the earth. There the painter, the naturalist, the geologist, the botanist, all, in fact, who feed their mind on nature's boundless stores, may find endless work and endless themes for praise. It is in the mountains especially that the rural economy of Switzerland is best understood, for there, by a personal acquaintance with the peasantry, and a close observation of their industry and hardihood, one learns the practical value of every portion of that earth, which, seen at a distance, seems but an arrangement of nature to captivate the eye and elevate the soul.

The rude quarry, the distant mountain-heights, the verdant slopes, the dark forests, and sloping vineyards, each furnishes to the Swiss people the

means of livelihood; and severe and rigorous are the lives led by those mountaineers whose existence depends on the cultivation of the high pastures, or the still more dangerous labour involved in felling the woods and transporting the timber for fuel to the plains below. In studying the rural economy of the Swiss cantons, they must not, like other countries, be classed by their geographical position on the globe; their vegetation depends not on their situation, but on the difference of their respective altitudes. By these altitudes the climate is determined, and on the climate depend the vegetation and produce extracted from them.\*

The various altitudes which distinguish the cantons of Switzerland are divided by agriculturists into three distinct zones, each having its own peculiar characteristic and pastoral value. The first of these zones corresponds with the level of the hills, commencing at 643 feet, beginning at the border of Lake Maggiore, in the canton of Tessin, and at 1156 feet on the shores of Lake Lemman, and rising 2500 feet above. Upon these levels are cultivated wheat, barley, and other crops of grain, the vine, which is an abundant source of profit to Switzerland, and rich supplies of fruit. The second zone includes the lower mountain-ranges, and within its limits the larger portion of Switzerland is found. Its altitudes are from 2500 to 5000 feet; and one of its principal features is the large and thick forests of pine, beech, and larch which adorn its heights.

Above this rises the Alpine zone, upon the steep slopes of which rich pasture-grounds are found, where thousands of cows are annually fed. This zone ranges from 8000 to 10,000 feet, till it reaches the boundary-line where vegetation ceases, and eternal snows and glaciers take its place. Although agriculturists have thus defined the different heights according to the especial characteristics of each zone, they are often found to interpenetrate one another.

Within the various heights are found three distinct geological formations, the nature of the rocks being in uniformity with the heights to which they attain. In the lower range of the country—namely, that of the hills which extend over the great basin lying between the Central Alps and the Jura chain—the rocks belong to the peculiar formation called molasse or limestone. In the mountains which rise above these hills, even some of the heights of the Bernese Oberland, the constitution of the rock is entirely calcareous. Again, above, in the chain of the Valais Mountains, the groups of the Bernina, Albula, and Selvieta, crystalline and metamorphic formations, such as granite, are found.

The most characteristic feature in the rural economy of Switzerland is decidedly that of its pasture-lands, which, forming a stable source of profit to the country, are cultivated with praiseworthy industry. Wherever the eye can detect the smallest patch of verdure, there some hardy mountaineer will be found ready to drive up his cow to the solitary spot, for the sake of the feed; or if beyond the reach of the four-footed beast, he will himself ascend, mow the grass, and binding it in bundles, either carry it down on his back, or

drag it to the nearest precipice, and roll it over into the plain below, where he can secure it on his descent. Many of these grass-plots are in such inaccessible nooks, that it is quite a service of danger to reach them, yet the heights around are annually scaled, and the tiny crops of hay secured by the intrepid peasant for winter forage.

It is calculated that, including cows, horses, sheep, and goats, no less than a million and a half of cattle are annually fed on the mountain pastures of Switzerland. In certain cantons, there are very strict rules in connection with the grazing of these animals; legislation determining the exact number of beasts that may be sent to feed on each separate pasturage.

As the wealth of each mountain canton is calculated by the number of cows nourished on its heights, it becomes an object of watchful care to prevent if possible the intrenchments made on the pastures by the fall of avalanches, which, burying in their course fragments of rocks, stones, and loose earth, cover the ground, and destroy all vegetation. These avalanches frequently occur in spring, and the devastations they make are only prevented by such precautions as raising barriers to divert their course, and especially in guarding from the woodman's axe those forests which, situated above, serve as a natural protection to the green swards beneath. These forests are, however, frequently destroyed in order to procure fuel; and then the climate below having depended on their warmth, becomes colder, and reacts on the vegetation, which directly seeks a lower level.

Notwithstanding every care, great inroads are annually made on the pastures, and during the last century, they have considerably diminished in number. In certain statistics published by the federal government, the Alpine pastures appear formerly to have covered an extent of seven hundred and twenty-nine thousand hectares. The heights above cannot resist atmospheric effects; and the action of constant rain and damp, added to the snow, have caused large portions of granite and rock to separate, and these falling heavily, have buried whole districts under their ruin; so that many a green-sward, on which the industrious mountaineer formerly led his flock, or gathered his winter's provision of hay, is now converted into sterile rock, or an eternal glacier. Popular legends abound in this country relative to the disappearance of these pastures, and the following is one preserved, and in many cases believed, by the simple peasants of Oberhasli, in the Swiss Oberland. I give it as a specimen of many others. 'In the district where the glacier of Gauli now raises its white pyramids, there was once a large Alpine or field which belonged to a rich and beautiful shepherdess called Blümlisalp. Her manner of life was not, however, in accordance with her beauty or position, and she accordingly incurred the displeasure of Heaven. One day, when Blümlisalp was wandering on her Alpine, accompanied by her favourite dog, Rhin, an avalanche descended, and swallowed up herself, her dog, and her herds, leaving no trace even of the pasturage where they dwelt. From that date, the mountain goes by the name of this unfortunate shepherdess; and even to this day the peasants pretend to hear, mid storm and rain, the silvery tinkles of her *troupeau's* bells, the howling of her dog, and her own voice crying to them to take warning, for that she and her dog, Rhin, are condemned to wander through

\* The writer is indebted to Monsieur Emile de Laveller's newspaper *Notes on Switzerland* for much of the information in these articles on the rural economy of that land, many parts being free translations from such abstracts.

all eternity as prisoners on the icy fields of her own rich Alpine.

The entire limits of Switzerland extend over four million hectares; and are thus divided: three thousand parts of the entire country are appropriated by lakes, rivers, and insurmountable rocks and glaciers; three thousand six hundred parts are consecrated to pasture-land; the forests occupy one thousand eight hundred; whilst the arable land, including the vineyards, only comprise one thousand five hundred parts. In no part of the globe, therefore, is there so large a portion of the earth devoted to grazing purposes as we find in Switzerland, and as we have before mentioned, one million and a half head of cattle are annually nourished on the heights. These have, however, to be fed during the long winter, when, for at least six months, the fields are buried from four to six feet deep in snow, and it is necessary to provide for the wants of both seasons. The Swiss people divide their pasture-ground into three distinct allotments, encouraging the growth of grass on one for hay; and driving their cattle on another, as soon as the snow melts, to feed during summer. These pastures, on which the grass is left to grow until the mower's scythe is brought into action, are generally found around Alpine villages, and are interspersed with groups of trees and chalets, affording shade and shelter to the peasantry.

In the early spring, these fields are of an exquisite emerald green; they bear an abundant herbage, and after mowing, have the appearance of the most carefully-cultivated lawns. The care bestowed on them is of a uniform description; they are well and thickly manured, and abundantly watered, for in these districts there is generally a good supply of water from the glaciers above, which is conducted, wherever it is needed, by simple wooden pipes laid across the fields.

In a few pastures, where this supply has not been close at hand, an immense amount of labour has been expended on irrigation, and most willingly contributed by the people, on account of the increased richness of vegetation which it produces. The Canton de Valais, for instance, has shewn itself most enterprising in this respect, for a place called Venthone, which was very arid and sterile, was successfully irrigated by turning the course of a little river over the land, which flowed many miles off. This was effected by conduits of wood, now attached to the rocks, now laid down across the land, finally inserted through the mountains, till they reached the desired spot. One cannot walk along the fields, in Switzerland, without meeting with little streamlets, half-hidden by the grass, but recognised by the murmuring sound their waters make as they flow down slope after slope, refreshing the earth in their gentle course.

Since, every year, the grass-fields are manured, and vegetation much increased by the process, it has become a difficulty, in the present day, to procure sufficient manure for agricultural purposes, which has led to quite a traffic in that article; and reservoirs are made in which all kinds of decayed matter are hoarded and encouraged, in order to supply the market.

From the immense number of cattle which are housed during the winter, the quantity of straw grown on the arable lands is not sufficient to meet the wants of litterage; and dry leaves and branches of fir-trees are used in large quantities for this purpose. These, of course, also make manure; and

the fields, when spread over with it, look quite black for a time, though a beautiful fine grass springs from under its warmth. The celebration of the hay harvest takes place in the autumn, and is made quite a fête-day among the peasants of these pastoral valleys. It being the only harvest they have to celebrate in the year, and one on which their maintenance depends, the mowers meet in companies, the peasants dance and sing, cider and wine flow abundantly, whilst songs of triumph proclaim, that come what may—winter, storm, and rain—their cattle and themselves are provided for till mowing-time comes again.

The hay made from the Swiss pasture-lands has a most delicious and aromatic smell, and, owing to the aridity of the sun and dryness of the atmosphere, it is so quickly made, that it retains a far greener colour than with us. It is housed in the numerous chalets and dependencies, which are dotted so thickly over the valleys and slopes, and affords many a soft bed to Alpine travellers.

In some few districts in Switzerland, where there are no high pasturages, dire necessity compels the shepherds, when their winter forage is ended, to allow their cows to crop the early blades of grass during the month of May. This, however, invariably spoils the first harvest.

The mowers have a wonderful adroitness in the way in which they perform their work; and to look at one of these fields of grass, directly after it has been mown, it is invariably so even and closely shorn, that one might imagine the razor of some giant barber had passed over the field. The first crop is gathered in June, and the second in August; and unless the season has been bad, the Swiss look to procure from these lower pasturages the wherewithal to feed their cattle during winter, supplemented only by a scanty crop from the Alps de Mai, after the cattle have left them for higher ground.

Before, however, we proceed to notice the higher pasture-grounds of Switzerland, we will take a cursory glance at that proportion of the land which is devoted to other than feeding purposes.

Switzerland, after Norway, is the country in Europe which gives the least attention to agriculture in its literal sense. Taking into consideration the culture of the vine even, only one-fifteenth part of the entire land is devoted to industry. It is true that the lower pasture-fields, which embrace an extent of four hundred and eighty-six hectares, might be successfully planted with corn; but as the Swiss depend more on their cattle for profit than anything else, these fields are used in preference for winter forage. In some cantons, no bread-corn whatever is grown; a few small fields of barley and a little Indian corn sown at the bottom of the valleys, serve as an apology for harvest; whilst to meet the deficiency of grain, and supply the nation with what is required for its consumption, public granaries, fed by foreign import, are supported.

Independent of the all-absorbing interest which the pastoral lands involve, there are other reasons which have hitherto militated against the increase of husbandry in Switzerland. The Swiss people are proverbial for their attachment to ancient customs, among which the Levitical system of tithes has until lately been strictly adhered to. This diminution of profit on the produce of arable land, though justly acknowledged, militated against any great competition in husbandry, especially when



more was to be gained by cattle-farming. Again, Swiss agriculturists used formerly to adhere strictly to the ancient triennial rule in the cultivation of land—namely, the succeeding periods of a year of winter harvest, a year of spring harvest, and a year of rest—in which the ground was allowed to run fallow—named in the Old Testament. This system naturally led to a scanty produce; but latterly there has been a more general enlightenment on the subject of agriculture, which has been introduced in the schools and colleges.

The greater portion of the arable land of Switzerland is found in the cantons of Bern, Vaud, Zürich, Argovia, Thurgovia, Soleure, Fribourg, Lucerne, Schaffhausen, and Bâle; and within the last twenty years, it may be said that great ameliorations have certainly taken place in respect to the cultivation of arable land in these districts, besides many useless old customs having been abolished. In Thurgovia, in the valley of Lake Constance, and in the Lower Rhine, the triennial system still, however, continues. In Tessin, on the contrary, thanks to the fertility of the soil, and the impetus given to vegetation by the ardent heat of the sun, the Italian style of culture is adopted; and after the first harvest has been gathered in, the fields are re-sown, and a second *récolte* either of buckwheat, maize, or millet encouraged.

Up to the present time, the quantity of grain produced is not equivalent to the natural goodness of the soil, or rather what the land might produce, if there were sufficient pains taken to enrich it. The pasture-lands and vineyards require so large an amount of manure, that there is not sufficient left for the agricultural purposes of those lands which are tilled, and the result is a poor and scanty harvest. At present, Switzerland also is far behind other countries in its implements of husbandry, very few of the newer inventions having as yet found their way into the mountain farms; nay, save in a few exceptional cases, the spade and other primitive tools are still used instead of the plough.

No other nation, not even excepting England, will be found on inquiry to be in so dependent a position for the staff of life. The fact, however, speaks for itself as to the industrial interchange of goods that the Swiss must needs carry on with other countries in order to supply their own land with bread; the manufactured articles of Switzerland being found all over the continent of Europe.

During the last century, the potato has been an object of much cultivation among Swiss agriculturists. It is found to bear the mountain climate very well, and, being of rapid growth, is well suited to the short summers of an Alpine country. The peasants use it for food almost as freely as the Irish, and cook it in various ways.

Among other plants, in Switzerland, devoted to industrial purposes, flax and hemp may be noticed; the former especially occupies some portion of every little farm, its bright-blue blossoms forming a pleasing contrast to the green vines or verdant fields between which they bloom.

A great deal of tobacco is grown in the cantons of Fribourg and Vaud, though not nearly enough for the consumption of the country, which, in comparison with its population, is enormous. Switzerland is also rich in fruits, which form no unimportant part of its produce in the spring; and as Swiss experience has decided that the trees do not injure the grass-lands, every available

meadow within reach of surveillance is planted with cherry, pear, apple, and plum trees. These trees grow at elevations as high as two thousand eight hundred feet, and in the Engadine Valley to three thousand six hundred feet.

Of all the fruit-trees in which Switzerland abounds, the vine plays by far the most important part, and is looked on as by far the greatest agricultural product of the country; whilst the produce of the wine is estimated at 200,000 hectolitres (equal to twenty-two English gallons), giving forty-four gallons to every hectare, or two and a half acres of vineyard ground. The cantons in which the vine is most cultivated are those of Vaud, Zürich, St Gall, Argovia, and Schaffhausen.

The woods and forests of Switzerland occupy about eighteen per cent. of the entire country, and the cut wood forms a large portion of product, it being used almost exclusively for building purposes and fuel. It was by studying the formation and growth of the forests, that little by little the effect was remarked which the different altitudes have in determining the vegetation of the country.

#### AT A FENIAN TRIAL.

THE way to Green Street is a narrow way, and of the Whitechapel type. Old clothes are sold there, and costermongers obtain largely. The court-house is grim as ancient Newgate. Over the front is a sort of balcony, with a contrivance for carrying out the extreme penalty of the law, which has a hungry, and, let us be thankful, a rusty look. Nobody has been hung there these twenty years. And now, having passed the sentinel police, who have all an air of ponderous detectiveness about them ever since Mr Stephens put on his hat and walked out of jail, come with me into a snug berth of which I am tenant by courtesy of the gentlemen of the press. You are struck with the curious 'public' of which the open court is composed. Lay spectators are regularly sandwiched by constables; and those guardians of the peace are everywhere but on the bench.

There is a strange contrast in appearance between the judges—one is lean, with the Gladstonian order of face and manner, colder a little, but not less precise than he, and equally fascinating in the charm of that lucid style, and that agreeable certainty of diction, which causes you always to feel easy about his safe arrival at the end of a sentence; the other is stout and full-blooded, with plenteous waistcoat, but with a massive clever head. The bar is like what the bar is everywhere. The professional carelessness with which everything is done strikes you as curious, when you consider what is to be won or lost by the prisoner. Glancing into the jury-box, I experience a sudden sensation of pain, which, however, is on a personal score; in fact, my tailor is at present upholding the hem of the palladium of liberty, and I am afraid he is under the impression I owe him for several suits; but let that pass. The prisoner is reading the informations sworn against him before the magistrate. He is very good-looking, about thirty years of age, dressed in black, and wearing fashionably-coloured gloves, and a splendid beard and moustache. His trial has occupied the whole of the previous day, and the Solicitor-general

is now concluding on behalf of the crown. He is a terrible little man, that Solicitor-general! He it was who cross-hackled Major Yelverton, and elicited from that gallant officer his private opinion on things in general. Listen to him, and see with what gradual but fatal art he draws away the frail planks upon which the prisoner might hope to escape. You think there is something almost vindictive in the force with which he drives home every telling point, and demolishes the case set up on the other side; but no, he simply does his duty, and any heat he displays comes from that warmth of advocacy which is natural to him, and which has been the prime cause of his success. He speaks at considerable length; and at one portion of his address, the prisoner suddenly leans over the dock, and beckons to his attorney, who, after consulting with his client, whispers to the junior counsel, who stretches across to his leader, who gets up, and begs the Solicitor-general's pardon, but he must correct him in an important date. The Solicitor-general admits the mistake, and the prisoner looks at the jury triumphantly. This occurs twice; and then the court adjourns for half an hour, after which we shall have the judge's charge.

The reporters talk of the case as a surgeon would of a good subject. 'He's likely to make a speech when convicted,' said one gentleman to me, 'and they must keep back our third edition until I return, so I hope it will be over early.' Their Lordships resume their seats; silence is called; the jury become attentive, and the prisoner for the first time appears anxious, and moves to the front of the dock, where he turns his head, as if not to lose a word of the charge. It is delivered by the thin judge.\* He commences by going through the story of Fenianism; telling the jury the object of it was to dethrone the Queen, and establish a republic. His Lordship speaks slowly and measuredly, until he comes to mention Stephens, when his tone at once changes, and becomes perceptibly emphatic.† He calls Stephens the arch-conspirator. Talking with him at any time for the last six years was almost as good, or as bad, as penal servitude to all who enjoyed the doubtful privilege of his acquaintance. He went to work to establish a paper on the principle of Fletcher of Saltoun; he could teach the people to defy the law, by inculcating them with seditious ballads, and putting a seditious newspaper into their hands, and of this newspaper the prisoner was a constant, and, it was alleged, an editorial, contributor. It was shewn by documentary evidence that the prisoner was 'Shaun' of that journal, whose verses had so Tyrtean a twang. It was proven that he presided over the mysterious column for correspondents; and that he very often propounded questions to himself of a far from innocent character, for the purpose of having the answers spread abroad. He was Ollamh Fodha, who recommended the early bottling of vitriol, or the timely use of drill-books to the Ollamh Fodhas in general. He was the 'Waterford Farmer,' who, it appeared, was anxious to add a Croppy pike to his stock of agricultural utensils; he was the 'Boyne Boy,' who was inquisitive on the score of contemporary history to the extent of requiring the number of troops stationed in Ireland

to be told him; and he was the 'Tipperary Man,' who wanted to know whether he was obliged to stand being spoken of from the altar by Father Benedictus, who hebdomadally anathematised secret societies.

The documentary evidence was irrefutable, and was brought home to the prisoner in a strange, and almost romantic way. A prayer-book was found in his possession containing an entry of his mother's death in most affectionate terms. The judge alluded to the fact as very creditable to the prisoner, whose cheek flushed, and whose eyes quivered at the mention of this. But this very memorandum sealed his fate. On being compared with the manuscript in the *Irish People* office, the handwriting was found to be identical. Then the prisoner's sister, who was produced in her brother's behalf, swore so delicately, nervously, and truthfully, and yet refused to swear the manuscript was *not* in her brother's handwriting, that her testimony, if it bore any way, certainly bore against the accused. And now the judge addressed himself to the case for the prisoner, according to a golden rule, that as the crown spoke last to the jury, the judge should refresh their recollections on the points urged for the defence. He put them fairly, and with a noble leaning to the man in the dock. The man in the dock is nervous enough at this moment; he has taken off his gloves, his fingers are locked together, and from time to time he shakes his head, with a despairing sort of gesture, at some friends near him, especially at one with a silly face, who appears deeply, but stupidly, interested in the proceedings. It is agreeable to follow, towards the conclusion of the charge, the course of the clear judicial intellect through all the devious passages of testimony, of argument, and of law, separating, arranging, untwisting, and sorting it all, for the convenience of the twelve gentlemen in the box. His Lordship finishes at last, having spoken for a full hour, and the jury retire to consider the verdict.

The lamps are lit by this time, and give the court a garish theatrical appearance. The prisoner is conversing earnestly with his attorney, and seems to be dissatisfied with something that had been done, or left undone, for him. And so half an hour goes by, and a sort of fog hangs about the roof of the court,—in which there are many dark and light Rembrandtish corners—and the prisoner is casting such impatient, feverish glances towards the door from which the jury will re-enter, that it pains one to look at him. Another quarter of an hour, and the reporters think they will have to leave without the expected 'sensation' for the last edition. Hush! here they are!

There is an oppressive silence while the clerk of the crown receives a large sheet of paper from the jury, and reads it to himself slowly and deliberately. I look at the prisoner, who is very pale, and catch the two jailers at either side of him nodding to each other, and edging closer to their charge, with a movement of taking possession, as it were, which makes my skin creep.

'Gentlemen, you say the prisoner is Guilty on all the counts?'

The foreman replies 'Yes.'

Then the prisoner is asked, amid a profound stillness, whether he has anything to urge why sentence should not be recorded against him, and is about to answer at once, when the judge compassionately cautions him to be careful, as he may

\* The cases are taken by the judges alternately.

† Stephens was tutor at one time to his Lordship's children.

by injudicious statements, aggravate his punishment. The reporters gaze at him with a hungry interest. One gentleman shoves a pencil hurriedly into my hand, and asks me to sharpen it for him, to provide for an accident, or the exhaustion of the instrument with which he is at present setting to work. The prisoner grasps the bar of the dock, and commences a set speech, which is in every respect a failure. You feel he is trying to cut a figure, and that he had neither education nor capacity for the performance. He becomes so incoherent and reckless, that you wonder at the patience of the judge in submitting to the boisterous tirade in which he assails the government, the Attorney-general, and indeed almost everybody. You find yourself gradually getting very disgusted with him, and rather relieved when the judge at last interrupts him, though not before the wretched man, in a desperate, unmeaning shout, has proclaimed his own guilt.

The judge then proceeds to sentence the prisoner, who relapses into a sullen silence, and only raises his head at the words: 'And the sentence of the court is, that you be kept in penal servitude for ten years.' Whereupon the man with the silly face grasps the prisoner's hand, as if he were congratulating him at having fallen in for a legacy; and half-a-dozen others immediately near the dock bid him good-bye, which I am glad to see they are not prevented from doing by the police or the jailers. He gives away his gloves and his handkerchief, and then disappears to the cells under where he is standing, there to be fettered before his removal to Kilmainham jail.

### HORSESHOES.

Ir, as old Gwillim asserts, the horseshoe is a type of servile subjection, the horse escaped the indignity of bearing the badge of servitude long after he knew what servitude was. Deborahs might sing of the hoofs of the war-horse being broken by his prancings, and less warlike individuals lament over the ruined feet of their useful servants; still, for ages, the domesticated horse could boast, like his untamed brethren, of 'feet that iron never shod.' In fact, the horseshoe, or at least what we call a horseshoe, appears to have been a thing utterly unknown to the wise men of antiquity. Some antiquaries—we beg pardon, archaeologists—we know, contend to the contrary, but the balance of evidence is decidedly against them. Homer, it is true, sings of 'brazen-footed' steeds, but he also sings of the 'brazen-voiced' Achilles; and we might as well infer that the Greek champion had a metallic tongue, as accept the poet's epithet as a proof that Greek horses wore shoes of brass. Had horseshoes been in use, we should hardly have Xenophon recommending stable-yards to be strewn with round stones, that the horses might strengthen their feet and harden their hoofs while taking their exercise; nor would Mithridates have been compelled to dispense with using cavalry at the siege of Cyzicus because the hoofs of the horses were worn out, as those of Alexander's army are said to have been, by incessant travelling. Moreover, as Greek writers make no mention of the horseshoe, so Greek artists have failed to represent it; and since they were in the habit of giving bronze bits and bridles to their marble steeds, the sculptors would surely have used the same material on their hoofs, if the horses of their time had worn shoes.

Roman writers on agricultural and veterinarian matters insist upon the necessity of choosing horses with hard hoofs, and advise owners of horses to see that their stables are floored with hard oak timber, in order to harden the hoofs of the animals; but not a word do they say about shoeing them. Suetonius indeed tells us that Nero's mules were shod with silver; and Pliny says Poppea had golden shoes for her mules, so that we must admit that shoes of some sort were worn by those animals; but they seem to have been only used occasionally, and made so as to slip on and off with ease, being generally of leather, fastened on with bands, and resembling those still to be seen in the streets of Jeddo.

The earliest horseshoe known, resembling our modern ones, was discovered in the tomb of Childeric, who died in 481; but similar shoes have been found in German and Vandal graves of probably greater antiquity. Iron horseshoes are mentioned in documents of the ninth century, but even then they could not have been in general use, as the French historian Daniel says his countrymen only shod their horses in frosty weather and on particular occasions. In truth, there seems no getting to any satisfactory conclusion respecting our subject. Meyrick asserts, as positively as though it were an incontrovertible fact, that the Conqueror introduced the art of shoeing horses into England; but if he be right, how are we to account for the presence of horseshoes among relics of an undoubtedly older date? In Lothbury, and again in Fenchurch Street, small horseshoes were found with fragments of Roman pottery; and a couple resembling them in shape and size were dug up in Wiltshire, and these not only had nail-holes like our modern horseshoes, but some of the nails remaining in them bent in such a manner as to shew they had been clenched after passing through the hoof of the horse. In the same county, the halves of two iron horseshoes were discovered in a British barrow. In Norfolk, an iron horseshoe turned up among a lot of Roman urns and spear-heads; this, too, had nail-holes, but was of a somewhat peculiar form, being round and broad in front, and narrowing very much backward, with its extreme ends brought close together; and at Battle-flats, where Harold met and defeated the Norwegian invaders, numbers of horseshoes have been found from time to time; these are chiefly remarkable for their smallness; but as the breed of horses then used in England were nothing like our modern equine race in size, it is just as likely that the diminutive shoes belonged to Harold's cavalry as to that of his foe.

Whether William was the introducer of horse-shoeing or not, he at any rate honoured the practitioners of the art. The family of De Ferrers owed its name and fortune to the Conqueror's Master of the Farriers, and the first earls bore six horseshoes on their shield in memory of the fact; the horseshoes' sable have disappeared from their place of honour on the shield of the Ferrers family, but one of their supporters yet bears the ancient symbol on his shoulder. From the same monarch, one Simon de Liry received the town of Northampton and the hundred of Falkley, on condition that he supplied shoes for the royal stud. Henry de Averngh held the manor of Morton in Essex by the tenure of finding one man, one horse, four horseshoes, a sack of barley, and an iron buckle for the use of the king whenever he went with his army into Wales;